

## ■ Increasing the number and diversity of community representatives

The state mandated a small number of parent and business representatives to serve on the boards (2). Some partnerships have found expanding the number of community board positions eliminates the perception that all board members have a vested interest in receiving Smart Start funds. Through strength in numbers, parents feel more supported and are more confident to speak up.

### Issues and considerations

Simply adding board representatives is not enough. Attention must be given to factors such as race, income level, gender, family composition, and business type so the board reflects the diverse populations the partnership serves. The number of parent and business positions must also be considered. When business representatives exceed parents, business has the potential to overshadow parent involvement.

*"Don't be afraid of getting diversity in the same room. That type of collaboration is really the beginning of some pretty solid change. And when everybody is hearing the same thing, in the same room, working on solutions together, rather than trying to address problems apart, the effect can't help but be good."*

*Board Member*

## ■ Recruiting and involving key community leaders

High profile parent and business leaders who are connected to larger community networks and constituencies make effective representatives and liaisons. Their affiliation increases the local partnership's visibility and credibility within the community. Parent leaders, familiar with organizational planning and decision-making, are more prepared to participate as board members than parents without prior leadership experience.

### Issues and considerations

Low income parents often have fewer leadership opportunities, making it more difficult to recruit those with prior leadership experience. It is necessary to create parent leaders by teaching them skills and supporting them in leadership positions.

*"There are no dormant members. All of the members are active in the board and in the community. I see that as the key to success."*

*Parent*